Moving Beyond LGBT-negativity

Fr Kevin McGovern,

Inspired by Pope Francis: 15 February 2018.

LGBT
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Transgender
- LGBTIQ, LGBTQQIP2SAASA, LGBT+

LGBT-negativity
- homonegativity: “any negative attitude towards homosexuality, or devaluation of LGB persons, by an individual, group, or society” (p. 530)
- transnegativity
- LGBT-negativity

LGBT-negativity (cont’d)
- internalized homonegativity (IH): “the negative attitudes towards homosexuality that LGB persons... come to adopt about themselves” (p. 530)
- internalized transnegativity
- internalized LGBT-negativity
LGBT-negativity (cont'd)

- IH: "widely thought to underpin the disproportionately high rates of psychological problems generally observed in LGB populations" (p. 530)

LGBT-negativity (cont'd)

poor self-esteem, psychological distress, anger, anxiety, depressive symptoms, "tendency to base one's thoughts, feelings and perspectives on those of other people," "fluctuations in one's values, feelings, and opinions," "even a tenuousness of being — a... shaky sense of personal existence," "weaker, less coherent sense of self," "problems with interpersonal relationships, rejection sensitivity, substance abuse, sexual risk behaviours, self-harm, suicidality..."

LGBT-negativity (cont'd)

- homonegativity: "nowhere more apparent than among mainstream religious bodies and adherents" (p. 530)

LGBT-negativity (cont'd)

- Australia-wide sample of 579, mostly LGB, with some Christian & some nonreligious
- for most, relatively little IH or distress
- "LGB Christians... reported higher levels of IH and distress over their sexuality than their nonreligious counterparts..." (p. 539)
LGBT-negativity (cont’d)

- "[F]ormer Christians who had apostatized reported less current distress over their sexuality... Nevertheless... former Christians still reported higher levels of... distress than those who had never been religious at all..." (p. 539)

LGBT-negativity (cont’d)

- "[M]ore widespread mental health change may only be realized with the rectifying of [homonegative] prejudice in socioreligious contexts." (p. 539)
- "[S]afe and supportive spaces, where LGB Christians are affirmed as inherently good may provide a platform for healthy development." (p. 539)

Building a Bridge

James Martin S.J. Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2358:
  - Catholics are called to treat LGBT persons "with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.”
  - “Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.”

A Two-Way Bridge

- "Many LGBT Catholics have told [Fr Martin] that they have felt hurt by the institutional church – unwelcomed, excluded, and insulted." (p. 4)
- Fr Martin calls for a two-way bridge:
  - asking the church to treat the LGBT community with "respect, compassion, and sensitivity," and
  - asking the LGBT community to reciprocate.
From the Church to the LGBT Community

- Respect: “calling a group what it asks to be called” (p. 22) – not “struggling with same-sex attraction” or “objectively disordered,” but gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender.
- Compassion: listening, asking questions – of LGBT persons and their parents (p. 33ff)
- Sensitivity: “come to know LBGT Catholics as friends.” (p. 41)

From the Church to the LGBT Community

Bishop Vincent Long. 13 September 2017. Building Pastoral letter on the same-sex marriage postal survey:

- “Throughout much of history, our gay and lesbian (or LGBTI) brothers and sisters have often not been treated with respect, sensitivity and compassion. Regrettably, the Church has not always been a place where they have felt welcomed, accepted and loved....

From the Church to the LGBT Community (cont’d)

Bishop Vincent Long. 13 September 2017. Building Pastoral letter on the same-sex marriage postal survey:

- Thus, regardless of the outcome of the survey, we must commit ourselves to the task of reaching out to our LGBTI brothers and sisters, affirming their dignity and accompanying them on our common journey towards the fullness of life and love in God."

From the LGBT Community to the Church

- Respect:
  - “not denigrating the bishops or the hierarchy” (p. 67)
  - “prayerfully consider what they are saying.... Ask: What are they saying? Why are they saying it? What lies behind their words? ... LGBT Catholics are called to listen, consider, pray, and of course use their informed consciences as they discern how to live their lives.” (pp 51-52)
From the LGBT Community to the Church (cont’d)

- Compassion: "not seeing... church leaders in the context of their complicated duties" (p. 58)
- Sensitivity: "coming to see that at least a few in positions of leadership in the church... might be homosexual men." (p. 59)

Pope Francis and the Art of Accompaniment


- "The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and lay – into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5)." (#169)

Pope Francis and the Art of Accompaniment (cont’d)


- "We need to practise the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing, Listening... is an openness of heart which makes possible... closeness.... Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word."
- "[T]his always demands patience..." (#171)

Growth and Limitation

- Moral Theology
  - what we should do
- Pastoral Theology
  - what we can do
Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

- Sometimes we accompany someone who can do what they should, though perhaps with difficulty.
- In these cases, we should challenge, encourage and support them to do what they should and can do.

Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

- Other times we accompany someone who really cannot do what they should.
  - Perhaps they cannot grasp the church’s moral teaching. Or perhaps they grasp it but they cannot live it.
  - In these cases, we should accept their real limitation in the context of the mercy of God.
  - Law of Respect for Subjectively Good Faith
  - or Law of Respect for Subjectively Invincible Ignorance

Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1735; quoted in Evangelium Gaudium, #44; and in Amoris Laetitia, #302:

- “Imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological factors.”

Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

- “Hence it can no longer simply be said that all those living in any ‘irregular’ situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace.” (Amoris Laetitia, #301)
- “For this reason, a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in ‘irregular’ situations, as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives.” (Amoris Laetitia, #305)
Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

• “Because of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors, it is possible that in an objective situation of sin – which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such – a person can be living in God’s grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church’s help to this end.” (Amoris Laetitia, #305, with footnote 351:

Growth and Limitation (cont’d)

• “In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments....
• I would also like to point out that the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.” (Amoris Laetitia, footnote 351; quoting Evangelium Gaudium, #47)

Some Limits to Accompaniment in LGBT matters

Archbishop Hart. 20 August 2017. Letter:

1) “Exemption...so that priests are not forced to officiate at weddings of same sex couples.”
2) “Exemption...so that the Church is not forced to make premises available for same sex marriages or functions.”
3) “A similar exemption...for [all] those supplying goods and services.”
4) “No restriction on the ability of the Church to teach about marriage as between a man and a woman.”

Pope Francis and Diego Neria Lejárraga

• 45-year-old Spaniard (in 2015)
• assigned female at birth
• a practising Catholic
• did not seek to transition while her mother was alive
• began to transition aged 40 – a year after his mother’s death
• has had gender affirmation surgery
Pope Francis and Diego Neria Lejárraga (cont’d)

- His bishop was supportive of him.
- A priest called him the "daughter of the devil."
- Other parishioners told him that now he had done this, he shouldn’t receive Communion.
- Diego wrote to Pope Francis to ask if there was room in the Church for someone like him.

Pope Francis and Diego Neria Lejárraga (cont’d)

- On 8 December 2014, Diego’s phone rang
- "Soy el Papa Francesco."
- "God loves all his children, however they are; you are a son of God, who accepts you exactly as you are. Of course you are a son of the Church!"
- Pope Francis invited Diego with his fiancée Macarena to meet him at the Vatican.

Pope Francis and Diego Neria Lejárraga (cont’d)

- Pope Francis met them on 24 January 2015. He met them not at his office but at his home at the Santa Maria guesthouse.
- Diego did not give details of the meeting, insisting it was private.
- It is reported that the Pope hugged him.
- Diego did say, "The meeting was a wonderful, intimate, unique experience that changed my life. Now I am finally at peace."

Presenter

Fr Kevin McGovern
St Cecilia’s Catholic Church
37 Hillside Parade
Glen Iris VIC 3146
T: (03) 9889-2073
E: camberwellsouth@cam.org.au